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It's alive! How kinetic property in ads shapes novelty perceptions

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It'S Alive! How Kinetic Property in Ads Shapes Novelty Perceptions

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We propose that speed and direction changes in moving ad elements influence product novelty perceptions. Three studies show that inanimate but moving elements within an advertisement enhance novelty perceptions due to their kinetic property. Further, we show that this effect is driven by perceptions of ad aliveness and product atypicality.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Past marketing research has proposed that how novel consumers perceive a product to be is predominantly determined by aspects inherent to the products themselves; for instance, their technology and/or functionality (Hirschman 1980; Wasson 1960). When a new product provides new attributes that substantially expand an existing category, consumers accord greater novelty to it (Chandy and Tellis 1998). In contrast, the psychology literature conceptualizes novelty as a collative property, indicating that the novelty of a stimulus is determined by comparison amongst different elements within it (Berlyne 1970). As such, stimulus novelty can be subjectively determined by perceptual reactions to visual elements. This insight on stimulus novelty suggests an opportunity to examine how physical properties of elements within an advertisement affect product-related novelty perceptions. We propose that perceptions of product novelty may also be determined by perceptual reactions to kinetic property of advertising elements, specifically, speed and direction changes in motion of embedded visual ad elements.

We base our proposition on the fundamental impact of motion on social perceptions (Michotte 1963; Scholl and Tremoulet 2000). Extant psychology literature suggests that lower-level kinetic properties of visual stimuli may be diagnostic antecedents to higher-level perceptions. For example, simple geometric figures are perceived as alive when their motion involves changes in speed and direction simultaneously (Tremoulet and Feldman 2000). Drawing on this notion, we argue that speed and direction changes embedded in ad elements enhance product novelty perceptions. We propose perceived ad aliveness and judgments of product atypicality as relevant intervening process constructs in our theory. We argue that speed and direction changes would lead to greater aliveness perceptions because such kinetic property typically represents how living agents move (Tremoulet and Feldman 2000). Further, perceived aliveness from the ad would lead to the product being judged as atypical which, in turn would enhance novelty perceptions.

While prior research has focused on static ad elements, to the best of our knowledge, our research is the first to systematically investigate dynamic aspects of advertising as a driver of consumer behavior. Managerially, kinetic ad elements such as motion graphic and kinetic typography are becoming increasingly important as the current multimedia environment allows advertising to easily adopt motion.

Study 1 (N = 59) examines the novelty-enhancing effect of kinetic property and its underlying process. Study 1 followed a single factor (kinetic property: high vs. low) between subject design where an ad for a fictitious new smartphone was shown to participants. In the high kinetic property condition, smartphone images and text appeared with changing speed and direction, while in the low kinetic property condition the same ad elements appeared at a constant speed and without directional changes. We manipulated kinetic property in the same way in studies 2 and 3. As predicted, participants perceived the smartphone as more novel when the kinetic property in the ad was high vs. low ($M_{\text{high kinetic}} = 4.21$, $M_{\text{low kinetic}} = 3.26$; $F(1, 57) = 9.69$, $p < .01$). We conducted a serial multiple mediator model to test the underlying process (Hayes 2012; model 6) and bootstrap analysis showed that the causal chain involving ad aliveness and product atypicality was significant (.2460, 95% CI = .08 to .59). This result indicates that the novelty-enhancing effect of kinetic property was

serially mediated by perceived ad aliveness and product atypicality perceptions.

Study 2 (N=117) further investigates the novelty-enhancing effect of kinetic property by crossing kinetic property (high vs. low) and new product type (RNPs vs. INPs). Since RNPs naturally contain advanced functionality, RNPs should be perceived as more novel than INPs. Further, if kinetic property enhances product novelty perceptions, the difference in novelty perceptions between RNPs and INPs should decrease when kinetic property in the ad is high.

We created ads for a fictitious new tablet: in the INP condition we utilized a commonly available tablet whereas in the RNP condition, we showed a new type of tablet providing advanced functionality (flexible display, interchangeable hardware). As predicted, in the low kinetic property ad, the RNP was perceived as more novel than the INP ($M_{\text{RNP}} = 4.61$, $M_{\text{INP}} = 2.98$; $F(1, 113) = 20.31$, $p < .001$). However, in the high kinetic property ad, the INP was perceived as novel as the RNP ($M_{\text{RNP}} = 4.06$, $M_{\text{INP}} = 3.77$; $F(1, 113) = 0.57$, $p > .10$).

Study 3 (N=75) examines a boundary condition involves consumers' ability to engage in visual processing by manipulating perceptual load. Lavie (1995) defines perceptual load as demands imposed on available perceptual capacity to process relevant stimuli. In our context, when the ad background is visually demanding, it would increase perceptual load. In this case, kinetic property in the ad will be less likely to "pop-out" from the ad background, and thus its impact on novelty perceptions will be mitigated.

We developed an online ad for a fictitious new digital camera. In the high perceptual load condition, we placed a visual graphic that induced an optical illusion in the ad background whereas in the low perceptual load condition this graphic was modified so as to not produce the optical illusion. As predicted, when perceptual load was low, novelty perceptions were greater in the high (vs. low) kinetic property ad ($M_{\text{high kinetic}} = 4.47$, $M_{\text{low kinetic}} = 3.45$; $F(1, 71) = 7.75$, $p < .05$). However, when perceptual load was high, novelty perceptions were equivalent across two ads ($M_{\text{high kinetic}} = 3.70$, $M_{\text{low kinetic}} = 3.83$; $F(1, 71) = .12$, $p > .70$). These results indicate that when the ad background is visually demanding, the novelty-enhancing effect of kinetic property is mitigated.

Across three studies, we provide strong evidence that kinetic property enhances product novelty perceptions. We theoretically contribute to potential determinants of product novelty judgments and show that even purely perceptual and ad execution factors can significantly influence product novelty perceptions. Managerially, our findings imply that favorable novelty judgments about new products may be elicited by minor adjustments to visual marketing stimuli. This implication opens up opportunities for low-budget brands or low-innovation firms to sustain their products in a competitive market.

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